

VZCZCXRO1060  
OO RUEHROV  
DE RUEHDS #1313/01 1311112  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 111112Z MAY 06  
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0487  
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001313

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF DAS YAMAMOTO AND AF/E

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KJUS](#) [PREL](#) [ET](#)

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: COMMISSION INVESTIGATING ETHIOPIAN  
ELECTORAL VIOLENCE INVESTIGATES THOUSANDS OF CLAIMS

REF: A. 05 ADDIS ABABA 4073

[1](#)B. ADDIS ABABA 0049

[1](#)C. ADDIS ABABA 0143

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Ambassador Huddleston and poloff met May 9 with Frehiwot Samuel, chair of the commission of inquiry established by Parliament to investigate anti-government demonstrations that occurred in June and November 2005. According to Frehiwot, a career judge, the commission got off to a slow start due to ineffective management and staff turnover, but now works seven days a week to comb through eyewitness accounts, funeral and hospital records, and media reports. The commission's role is to determine whether government security forces responded with proportional force, ascertain whether the Government observed Ethiopian human rights standards, and calculate the number of casualties and value of property damaged. The commission's findings were due to be released in March, but Frehiwot indicates July is a more realistic timeframe. The commission works as government prosecutors make their case in Ethiopia's High Court that approximately 80 opposition leaders and supporters, independent journalists, and NGO representatives should face life imprisonment or death for seeking to overthrow the government through violent demonstrations. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The formation of an independent commission to investigate the June 8, 2005, killings of civilians was one of eight preconditions sought by the opposition CUD in October 2005 for CUD members to reverse its decision to boycott entering Parliament. Parliament's approval of the commission in early December came one month after anti-government demonstrations occurred in the capital in early November, and followed the GOE's arrest of at least 80 opposition leaders and supporters on anti-government charges that include armed uprising, high treason, and genocide. International media and human rights groups report that armed security forces killed at least forty individuals during the November demonstrations alone. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi appointed all the commission's members, who were subsequently approved by Parliament (ref A).

FALSE START, BUT OFF AND RUNNING

[1](#)3. (SBU) Frehiwot told the Ambassador he had been disappointed with the commission's progress thus far and attributed its lackluster performance to staff turnover and general incompetence of the vice chairperson, Shiferaw Jamo, a consultant to the GOE's Ministry of Capacity Building. Expectations of a quick start to the investigation process were quelled when only seven of the 11 people originally

named to the commission chose to take part. Calls to get all members of the commission to take part failed according to Frehiwot. The commission, Frehiwot said, had been additionally hamstrung by the vice chairperson's inability to complete any tasks assigned to him. The vice chairperson resigned from the commission at Frehiwot's request. The commission currently operates with 6 members -- just enough to achieve quorum as dictated by the proclamation establishing it.

¶4. (SBU) Frehiwot reported that the commission was back on track and operating at full capacity. He explained how the commission takes a methodical approach to the investigation. The commission started with records from "Idir" associations (community-based organizations through which all deaths are reported) and then cross-checked the data with multiple sources, including police, hospital, media and eyewitness accounts. Frehiwot did not report the number of deaths verified, but told the Ambassador that thus far 15,000 people were confirmed to have been jailed as a result of June and November demonstrations. He noted the process was time consuming and resource intensive, but indicated a final report would be complete prior to parliament's recess in July.

¶5. (SBU) Frehiwot concluded the meeting by explaining to the Ambassador that the five investigators currently assigned to the commission would not be sufficient. A city-wide search for well-respected and qualified investigators revealed that the top three candidates worked for the embassy as RSO investigators. Frehiwot asked the Ambassador to consider allowing one or more of these investigators to work for the commission.

¶6. (SBU) According to High Court contacts, the evidentiary phase of the ongoing trial of CUD chairperson Hailu Shawel

ADDIS ABAB 00001313 002 OF 002

and approximately 80 other defendants will be suspended for one day (May 11), to allow the commission of inquiry to interview the detainees.  
HUDDLESTON